

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 31, 2005

TO: Mary. J. Alvord, City Manager

FROM: Susan M. Georgino, Community Development Director
via: Greg Herrmann, Assistant Community Development Director/City Planner
by: Joy R. Forbes, Deputy City Planner

SUBJECT: ALAMEDA NORTH NEIGHBORHOOD PROTECTION PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present the input received from the community and to request Council direction for installing various traffic calming measures to address traffic and parking problems in the area north of Alameda and Olive near the Media District.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS:

On May 27, 2003, the City Council voted 3-0 (with two Members recusing themselves because they live in the area) to direct staff to conduct a study on traffic and parking conditions in the area bounded by Hollywood Way, Oak Street, Buena Vista Street, Olive Avenue and Alameda Avenue. During the public hearings for the first "Platt project" (a development proposed at the southwest intersection of Alameda and Lima Street) residents informed Council that they were currently facing cut through traffic, speeding and parking problems on their streets due to other commercial development in the Media District. The residents were concerned that additional development, such as the Bob Hope project, Pinnacle Phase II and the Platt project, would exacerbate those problems. The City Council selected this area because it appeared to be the area most directly affected by the existing and proposed commercial development.

Hiring a Consultant

Staff entered into a contract with Kaku Associates who was the firm the City had retained to prepare the second Platt project traffic study. Staff felt it was important to have the same firm working on both studies as they would be familiar with current traffic impacts and future cumulative impacts. The scope of work for Kaku included: 1) taking existing traffic counts of all of the residential streets in the study area when school was in session; 2) meeting and working with area neighbors to determine what concerns exist and what solutions could be found; 3) meeting with City staff to be sure measures would not interfere with safety personnel or response time; 4) developing a neighborhood protection program given these various community inputs and given Kaku's expertise in the traffic engineering field; and, 5) presenting the program to the community and Council.

Questionnaire

For the first step, staff sent out a letter in September 2003 to all property owners and tenants in the study area, including businesses. The letter informed the neighbors of the study authorized by the City Council and included a two-page questionnaire that asked various questions regarding the level of traffic and parking intrusion. (Exhibit A) The letter asked for the return of the questionnaire and also informed the community of an upcoming meeting where area neighbors could voice their concerns. During this time, traffic segment and intersection counts were also taken.

The City received over 150 responses to the questionnaire with a good geographic coverage within the study area. The issues of highest concern were speeding, cut through traffic, traffic volumes, stop sign running/enforcement and commercial parking encroachment. Many respondents offered suggestions such as installing diverters, speed humps and permit parking. Many also thought that the current problems were not too great, but would be much worse with more development.

Community Meetings

The first community meeting was held on October 29, 2003 with approximately 40 people in attendance. Although business operators and property owners were invited to all meetings, most of the attendees were residents who lived in the study area. Staff and the City's consultant outlined the goals of the study; which were to develop a plan that improves traffic safety, and preserves roadway capacity and parking for neighbors, and reduced cut through traffic and eliminated parking encroachments. A summary of the questionnaires received was discussed and the neighbors were told of the traffic control "toolbox," which are measures that are typically used to calm traffic and addresses problems that the residents are facing. (Exhibit B) The results of the traffic counts given to the residents indicated that the traffic volumes were not unusual for residential streets, but that certainly some improvements could be made. (Exhibit C)

The residents were also told of the next steps; which would include a full summary of the questionnaire responses, neighborhood walkabouts that the consultant would conduct, and future meetings where residents would be asked to participate in the creation of the plan. Throughout the process, the residents were informed that the Council had not yet identified any funding for the improvements. The consultant stated that any changes imposed would affect the residents more than any others and that the Police and Fire departments would be consulted on any proposed plan. The residents were informed that the purpose of the meetings was to build consensus and plan together, and that this proposal would be "their plan."

The next community meeting was held in November 2003. There were approximately 25 people in attendance. Again, the questionnaires and traffic control toolbox were discussed and the consultant presented photographs of the various measures installed in other communities. The balance of the meeting was conducted in a workshop format where residents were asked to break up into groups and create their own plan using the toolbox measures. Each group then presented their plan to all attendees. Staff informed the group that the next steps would be to consolidate the group plans and discuss the measures proposed with the Police and Fire departments.

For the next four months, the consultant met with various staff members and Stevenson School representatives (the school is adjacent to the study area) and worked to consolidate the various plans into one recommended proposal. The next community meeting was held on April 1, 2004. At this meeting a summary of the goals of the study was given and the focus of the meeting was on the various plans that the community groups had created. Then the consultant reviewed the draft proposal that combined the various elements of the group plans, made changes and included additions. The draft proposal was intended to achieve the effects of the group plans, to do the minimum possible because changes mostly effect the residents, to use sound traffic engineering principals, and to obtain approval from the Police and Fire departments. The residents present at this meeting (over 25) requested changes to some elements, but generally approved the plan. When discussing next steps, the residents were given the option of this being the final meeting, or that one final meeting could be held to allow the residents the opportunity to see the final product which would be a brochure outlining the plan including the changes discussed. The residents asked for one final meeting because they wanted to see the final program in brochure format before it was mailed to residents, and to see if more people would attend the final meeting.

This meeting was held on May 19. The turnout at this meeting was small, with generally the same people who had been to the other meetings stating support for this proposal. There were a few questions about the program, specifically from a resident on Whitnall who did not like the number of diverters and did not believe that the proposed stop signs would adequately address the new cut through traffic that they might experience. The consultant said that the proposed plan was an attempt to take in all concerns and that the voting would determine if changes needed to be made. Because of the low turnout, the residents present asked again for one more meeting. They specifically asked to have the meeting after the voting brochures had been mailed in case there were questions.

Staff worked to finalize the brochure and have it printed for mailing. (Exhibit D) The new “final” meeting was scheduled for January 13, 2005 and was noticed via the final voting brochure. There were 70 residents and property owners that attended this meeting. By far the most attended meeting. Many of the residents in attendance resided outside the study area boundaries. They had been notified of this meeting by a neighbor within the study area. Most of those from outside the study area lived on Fairview Street and most were opposed to the program that had been developed. The residents who had attended previous meetings and supported the project stated their willingness to listen to the neighbors’ concerns, but also stated they have been working on this for a long time and wanted to proceed with at least some of the plan. The biggest complaint by the residents in attendance was that it appeared that diverters (cutting off one direction of traffic) were being proposed for many of the streets and they believed that meant that more traffic would use Fairview and Whitnall Highway.

Voting

All property owners and tenants within the study area received the brochure, and were asked to include their address on the voting card and return it to the City. At the final meeting, staff extended the offer to vote to all residents, even if they were outside the project area. Some votes were handed in at the final meeting; voting technically ended January 20, but votes continued to come in throughout February. The City received a total of 186 votes, 42 from outside the project

area. Of the 186 total, 80 were from the Fairview/Whitnall streets, both within and outside the project area. Below is a simplified accounting of the votes:

43 – no to the entire protection program (8 of these votes were from outside the study area)

34 – yes to everything

16 – yes except permit parking

12 – yes to only permit parking

50 – yes with changes (and some changes were substantial – 26 of these votes were from outside the study area)

31 – yes with specific changes/deletion (these voting forms were produced by one

Fairview resident and handed out to the Fairview/Whitnall residents – 8 of these votes were from outside the study area)

The voting turnout by street was very low, except for the Fairview/Whitnall streets. Below is a tally of the number of votes per street and a listing if there was a mandate for or against the program. This list includes only votes within the study area except where indicated for Fairview:

Cordova – 10 out of 47 lots voted – 21% with 5 definite no and 3 definite yes

Avon – 7 out of 43 lots voted – 16% with 0 definite no and 4 definite yes

Lima – 17 out of 48 lots voted – 35% with 1 definite no and 7 definite yes

California – 11 out of 43 lots voted – 26% with 4 definite no and 1 definite yes

Ontario – 4 out of 16 lots voted – 25% with 2 definite no and 2 definite yes

Whitnall – 24 out of 34 lots voted – 71% with 10 definite no and 0 definite yes

Fairview – 18 out of 22 lots voted – 82% with 1 definite no and 0 definite yes (w/in project area)

Fairview – 33 out of 48 lots voted – 69% with 5 definite no and 0 definite yes (outside project area)

Niagara – 6 out of 33 lots voted – 18% with 3 definite no and 2 definite yes

Catalina – 1 out of 28 lots voted – 4% with 0 definite no and 0 definite yes

Florence – 3 out of 23 lots voted – 13% with 0 definite no and 1 definite yes

Naomi – 2 out of 13 lots voted – 15% with 0 definite no and 1 definite yes

Alameda – 8 out of 32 lots voted – 25% with 1 definite no and 5 definite yes

Olive – 11 out of 38 lots voted – 29% with 2 definite no and 2 definite yes

Except for Fairview and Whitnall, no streets had greater than a 35% turn out for voting. For residents to get permit parking on their street through the traditional Public Works petition process, they would need an 80% turn out for voting, and 2/3 of the street would need to vote in favor of the change.

Details of the Protection Program

The goal of the program was to keep it simple and make the least amount of changes to successfully reduce cut through traffic, speeding and parking impacts. Almost all residents expressed their wishes for permit parking along the street. The streets that already have permit parking would keep theirs, but permit parking would be added to the other streets. The permit parking would be “two hour except by permit” and the hours of enforcement would be 8am to 6pm, Monday through Friday. One unusual part of the permit parking program is that residents living in the multiple family units along Alameda Avenue also wanted permit parking, but the

single family residents did not want crossover between the two areas. Therefore, staff prepared the program to have separate permits for the Alameda residents and those permits would only work on the Alameda frontages, south of the alley.

A second part of the program was a simple speed awareness campaign. Speed trailers that inform drivers of their travel speeds would be placed on most streets. Problem areas would be the subject of increased Police enforcement and might even lead to the installation of a permanent variable speed control sign. This was supported at the earlier meetings and while it was not specifically noted by some as being a point of controversy, it was also not specifically supported.

The biggest controversy of the program was the proposed diverters. A northbound diverter currently exists at Cordova, and new ones are proposed for Avon, Lima, Whitnall (at Fairview) and Catalina. The consultant had not originally proposed one for Lima since the street dead ends into the school, where a raised intersection was proposed (the raised intersection with a three way stop slows down traffic and makes the children easier to see). However, the residents who live on Lima that attended the meetings specifically asked for that change. There are currently speed humps on California and the consultant wanted to be sure traffic would not increase on Fairview and Whitnall, which is why the diverter at Whitnall was proposed. Additionally, the consultant included a three-way stop sign at Fairview and Whitnall and a four-way stop sign at Fairview and Oak. And the last traffic calming measure proposed for this two-street area was the addition of angled parking along Fairview, which has the dual effect of slowing down traffic and providing some parking for nearby commercial uses. These measures would make Fairview an unattractive alternative for someone coming from Alameda. However, the Fairview/Whitnall residents who attended the final meeting and who voted still believed the plan would cause them increased traffic.

Another controversial part of the program was the creation of street parking along the triangular park where Whitnall, California and Oak meet. This was developed because the creation of permit parking would leave many school employees, parents and visitors without daytime parking or would force them onto streets above Oak that did not have permit parking. This then would cause a parking problem for those residents. The layout proposed would have the effect of slowing down traffic by narrowing the street for the parking and would also leave northbound California traffic to be diverted if they wanted to continue north. The stop sign at California and Oak would be moved to Whitnall and Oak and a small triangular park would remain. The Fairview/Whitnall residents stated they did not want a parking lot next to their homes.

The plan also proposed to eliminate the left turn from northbound Buena Vista to Oak. Some at the final meeting did not support this change although it was supported at the earlier meetings. This intersection has been problematic for some time, due to conflicts with the southbound Buena Vista left turn lane. While the change would provide additional protection, it would also affect neighborhood access for the residents as well.

One simple change proposed that would likely have a big effect on traffic speeds was striping parking areas and red curbing the intersections along Oak. The consultant has found that this helps to reduce speeds even when cars are not parked on the street because the driver visually

gets a sense that the street is more narrow. Again, this item was supported by the group in the earlier meetings and while it did not seem a point of controversy, it was not explicitly supported either.

The plan also mentioned the Olive/Alameda intersection improvements that are currently planned by the Public Works Department, which will alleviate some turning movements for the residents. And the plan included turning restrictions that are proposed with the new freeway on-ramp and other developments in the area.

Approval Process

Because of the initial interest in this protection program, staff was hopeful that voting might not even be necessary, that the residents in attendance would be enough to “speak for the larger group.” However, because of the large study area, staff determined that a vote of all the residents was necessary. Staff questions if the voting received is enough to consider it representative of the entire neighborhood. And because of the diversity in voting, staff questions which program or part of the program is supported by a majority of the community. Staff mailed a notice of this Council meeting to the entire study area, and also to those in attendance at the final meeting so they might offer their input directly to the City Council.

The residents were told the process for the program was to get neighborhood agreement, then take that as the recommended plan to City Council. Whatever Council approved, a funding source would have to be identified since none had been identified. Since the community meetings, the City Council did approve the Platt project which offered a funding source for the protection program. Once the program was implemented, staff would go back to the community after 6 to 12 months and review the effectiveness of the measures.

RECOMMENDATION & FISCAL IMPACT:

As stated earlier, if the residents were subject to the normal Public Works process to implement permit parking, the voting would not be close to the number of returned votes needed or the majority of approval needed., except for Fairview and Whitnall. Additionally, the criteria that is required to demonstrate that at least 75% of the available parking is occupied at regular and significant intervals during peak demand would not be met based on the field data that the consultant collected. But, because staff has heard much from a smaller portion of this neighborhood, it may be appropriate to implement some elements of the program which did receive more support.

Although the Public Works Department stated reservations regarding circumventing the existing Burbank Municipal Code process for permit parking, staff recommends permit parking be implemented on all of the local streets. Additionally, staff recommends beginning the implementation of the speed awareness campaign. The Police Department already began implementing this on some streets through their normal process of locating speed trailers. Staff also recommends the parking lane striping and intersection red curbing be completed along Oak. This was not listed as an item of great controversy and could have a large impact on speeds. Finally, staff recommends that the raised three way stop sign intersection at Lima and Oak be installed. This item did not receive a large amount of support, but also was not listed as a

specific item that should be excluded. There was not a mandate for this, but because staff is not proposing diverters for this first phase of implementation, this raised intersection could show how cut through traffic on Lima could be reduced.

Staff is not proposing at this time to install the other protection measures such as permit parking on Alameda, diverters, stop sign installations and relocations (except Lima), addition of parking at Whitnall/California/Oak and along Fairview, and the turn restriction at Buena Vista and Olive.

Staff recommends implementing this first phase and then taking new data counts within 12 months. Staff recommends sharing that data with the study area residents and obtaining empirical data from them. Staff further recommends that all residents north of Oak to Verdugo be included in this meeting. The purpose would not be to extend the study area, but simply to gather their input on how the first phase may have impacted their streets. For example, staff believes the permit parking might impact street parking north of Oak because of the school parking. Then, because a second phase might likely involve diverters, they could be made part of the process to learn how traffic might likely flow once measures such as diverters are installed.

The first phase of improvements proposed are categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) according to §15301(c) of the CEQA guidelines, which pertains to minor alterations of existing streets.

The cost of phase one improvements is estimated at \$57,000. (Exhibit E) The permit parking system is estimated at \$15,000. The cost to deploy the speed trailers is estimated at \$20,000, but could be completed on a limited basis. The Oak parking striping and red curbing is estimated at just over \$12,000 and the raised intersection has a cost of \$10,000. There are also costs associated with printing permits and of course the staff time to administer all of these actions. Most of these costs can be absorbed within current department budgets. For example, the Police Department can simply deploy their speed trailers within this area rather than another. Also, as a regular course of business, the Public Works Department can have the permit parking signs installed and the striping and curb painting completed. The raised intersection, however, would likely be installed using an outside contractor.

The City Council approved Planned Development (PD) 2003-1 for the Platt project which included a requirement for the developer to provide \$150,000 toward design and implementation of a neighborhood protection program. This fee, however, would not be due to the City until the developer owns all of the property under the PD zone and signs the development agreement. Therefore, the City would have to front the costs of the first phase and then be reimbursed by the developer at a later date. Staff recommends that the cost of materials for all elements of the program and the cost of the contractor for the raised intersection be paid for out of the existing holding account of the Fund 127 Development Impact Fees account which is estimated at \$15,000. Staff further recommends that the labor costs from each department be paid through their annual budgets. An accounting of all expenses (labor and materials) will be kept so that an invoice may be sent to the developer for reimbursement.

Additionally, if the City proceeds with the follow up traffic counts and meetings with the neighborhood, a new contract would need to be completed with the consultant. This has an estimated cost of \$10,000, but again, would be reimbursed by the developer. This cost would not occur for another 12 months.

LIST OF EXHIBITS:

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| Exhibit A | Letter and questionnaire mailed to study area property owners and tenants |
| Exhibit B | Traffic Control Toolbox distributed to residents |
| Exhibit C | Results of segment and intersection counts |
| Exhibit D | Proposed Neighborhood Protection Plan Voting Brochure |
| Exhibit E | Program estimated cost |